

British Columbia

B.C. to allow designated visits for residents in long-term care after months of restrictions

'Today is a brighter day for us all,' says provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry

[Rhianna Schmunk](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jun 30, 2020 11:30 AM PT | Last Updated: June 30, 2020



Patricia Grinstead, a 91-year old who survived COVID-19, touches hands with her daughter through a glass barrier at the Lynn Valley Care Centre in North Vancouver on June 23. (Ben Nelms/CBC)

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B.C. is easing restrictions for visits in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities across the province, allowing residents to have in-person visits for the first time since March.

Residents will be able to see one person at a time — a single, "designated" visitor — in a designated area. The visits will be booked in advance and can happen indoors, outdoors or, in some cases, in a single room.

Visitors will be screened for illness upon entry and must wear a mask.

For many residents, it will be the first time they've seen somebody they love in three-and-a-half months.

"There have been many dark and anxious days, but today is a brighter day for us all," Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry said Tuesday.

- [**Lynn Valley care-home nurse loses job after allegedly failing to wear PPE properly around COVID-19 patients**](#)

The designated visitor will be trained on using personal protective equipment, or PPE, to ensure the visit happens safely.

Visits will not be allowed in facilities with ongoing outbreaks of COVID-19. There are currently five such outbreaks in B.C.

Henry said residents of long-term care or assisted living facilities should still limit their visits outside to essential trips only. She said personal service providers such as barbers and hairdressers will also be now allowed into facilities, so long as they follow safety protocol.

Henry said the risk in communities is low enough and the supply of PPE strong enough to start opening visits up.

"We're tipping the balance now where not having your family, not having your loved one, is starting to outweigh the risks. But it is a very fine balance," she said.

"I will admit that I am anxious, but also hopeful."

Dr. Bonnie Henry says the decision of when to allow long-term care home residents visitors has caused her "the most distress in the last few months":



Dr. Henry is 'anxious' but 'hopeful' as B.C. eases restrictions on long-term care home visitors

1 year ago | 2:18

B.C.'s provincial health officer says the risk of COVID-19 is low enough to ease restrictions for the first time in three months. 2:18

To help facilitate safe visits, Health Minister Adrian Dix said the province is providing more than \$160 million so long-term care and assisted living facilities for seniors can hire more full-time staff. Dix said the money will equate to about 2,040 additional staff for more than 680 homes across the province, both public and private.

Non-essential visits were banned from care homes after health officials declared an outbreak inside the Lynn Valley Care Centre in North Vancouver in early March.

Seniors and elders are most at risk for serious illness and death if they become sick with COVID-19. Dix said nearly 100 people in long-term care have died of the illness provincially.

Several more in assisted living have also died.

Patricia Grinstead, right, visits her daughter through a glass barrier at the Lynn Valley Care Centre in North Vancouver on June 23. (Ben Nelms/CBC)

Henry said it is critical for loved ones to cancel visits if they feel the slightest bit unwell, so as not to undo the progress made over the past few months.

"To all of the seniors and elders in our care homes: thank you. This has been a difficult time for you, being separated from the ones you love. For many people, with things like dementia, it can be a very confusing and difficult time," Henry said.

"You have shown resilience, determination and courage despite this challenge... As we move forward, we'll all do this slowly and carefully, so that sacrifice is not wasted."

- [System left seniors at risk, say families caught in COVID-19 outbreak at B.C. care home](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/care-home-visits-covid-19-bc-1.5632977)

Long-term care homes have been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic and [new outbreaks continue to happen, but experts say B.C. has fared better](#) than other provinces like Ontario and Quebec in slowing the spread of the virus inside the facilities.

Around 32,000 people in B.C. live in long-term care or assisted living. Henry said the visitation policy will be reviewed monthly.



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